

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 30, 2001

CONTACT:
Dena Graziano: (202)225-6504

Conyers Plans to Introduce Health Care Antitrust Legislation Early Next Year

Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee issued the following statement regarding the introduction of his new health care antitrust legislation:

"I am pleased to announce that early next year I am planning to introduce legislation, along with Rep. Barr (R-GA), that would provide long needed antitrust relief to physicians. This will be a follow up to legislation sponsored by myself and former Rep. Campbell that overwhelmingly passed the House last year by a 276 to 136 vote.

Our legislation will help level the playing field with giant health care insurers and return decision making from insurance bureaucrats to individual physicians, pharmacists, and other health care providers and their patients.

The legislation is needed to respond to two alarming anti-consumer trends – the ever increasing level of concentration among health insurers and exclusionary contracting practices by health insurance companies. The last five years have seen a massive consolidation in the health insurance and managed care market as more than a dozen health insurance competitors have been eliminated through mergers and acquisitions.

The dangers posed by this ever increasing market concentration are exacerbated by the practice of health insurers of engaging in heavy-handed negotiating tactics and requiring exclusionary contractual commitments from health care providers. Such restrictive contractual terms are frequently proffered on a "take it or leave it" basis to health care providers, under the threat of the loss of the provider's patients or exclusion from their access to other patients.

This trend was just confirmed by a path breaking study released by the American Medical Association two weeks ago which confirmed that in a large number of markets, health insurers have substantial leverage over patients and physicians in determining the scope, quality, and coverage of quality health care. The study makes clear that the sooner we enact antitrust relief, the better it will be for health care in this country."

#107-114#